

FACT SHEET:

United States Support to Kyrgyzstan Parliamentary Elections October 10, 2010

The United States fully supports the democratic process leading up to the Kyrgyzstan Parliamentary elections scheduled for October 10, 2010.

The United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor (DRL), the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and Embassy Public Affairs, has partnered with the government and civil society at the national and oblast levels to build public trust, and address citizen priorities and expectations. This support will also enable the new Parliament to better fulfill its roles and responsibilities in a transparent and accountable manner.

The United States, between 2009 and 2010, provided more than \$8.6 million to support Democracy and Governance initiatives throughout the country. Specifically, recent support for the October 2010 Parliamentary Elections has totaled \$5 million. This includes the following:

- I. Improving Election Administration** – Supporting areas such as technical assistance to election commissions and training of their members conducted by International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) through USAID-funded programs;
- II. Voter and Civic Education** – Includes efforts to educate and motivate citizens and voters. Partners include the Central Election Commission and local NGOs;
- III. Grassroots Initiatives** – Activities encompass U.S. Embassy Democracy Commission grants to local NGOs, as well as efforts of long-time USAID implementers, such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and Freedom House;
- IV. Political Party Work** – Election support initiatives being conducted by IRI and NDI under USAID funding;
- V. Publications** – Training and voter education materials have been produced and published with USG assistance;
- VI. Trainings** – The USG has supported election trainings that have been conducted by IFES, NDI, IRI, and ABA-ROLI;

VII. Observation and Monitoring – Both domestic and international election observations are supported by the USG;

VIII. Training and Equipping Police – The INL-supported effort to train police focuses on securing polling stations and managing crowds in an election environment. Five hundred police were trained in September and October along with 15 commanding officers.

Selected U.S. Contributions:

- **Training of election commissions:** Building on its June referendum experience, USAID-funded IFES has conducted training for all four levels of election administration operating in Kyrgyzstan, i.e., the Central Election Commission (CEC) itself, the nine oblast/city Commissions, 56 territorial commissions and approximately 2,300 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). IFES trained over 150 trainers in order to train groups of election commission workers throughout the entire country. The full-day trainings reached between 18,000 and 20,000 individuals who will be working at the polling stations on Election Day. Written materials, such as Election Day Guides and various manuals have been developed by IFES as training aids.
- **USAID/OTI** provided \$286,000 to support a National Non-Violence Campaign aimed at mitigating tensions and preventing the likelihood of violence in the run-up to Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary elections to be held on October 10, 2010. The campaign included sports events, concerts, art festivals, and distribution of 10,000 media packages with items such as t-shirts and leaflets that have messages on tolerance and unity in three languages. These packages were distributed at different events around the country. The campaign started in Bishkek on September 20 and followed with events around the country including Osh on September 30 and Talas on October 2. It culminated in Bishkek on October 5.
- **USAID/OTI sponsored a 90-minute video** and airing of an extraordinary September 7 Forum on elections chaired by President Otunbaeva. The video appeared on five TV stations simultaneously on September 10. The U.S. Embassy helped finance the forum itself, which was a six-hour candid exchange of views among the President, top government officials and the representatives of political parties and civil society.
- **NDI produced a series of 30-minute** weekly political debate shows, *Jangy Bashat*, on the national television network to educate citizens on key political developments related to the new constitution, the government, the campaign, and the election. This

weekly broadcast was the springboard for the debates being held during the last week before the election.

- **Televised Debates - Public Affairs and USAID**, in cooperation with other members of international community, supported nine 90-minute live debates among the 29 political parties. The CEC drew lots to determine the order of parties participating in the debates. The Debates were aired from September 29 to October 8, and featured three or four parties nightly. The Debates were aired on National TV and conducted in both Russian and Kyrgyz. Through an internet portal and via twitter Kyrgyz citizens were free to leave their questions for candidates or political parties.

The U.S. Embassy's Democracy Commission funded a number of grants aimed at increasing public participation, especially youth, in the democratic process and expanding awareness of voters' legal rights. Activities and products included roundtable discussions, meetings, debates, website postings, radio and TV programs, posters, booklets and public service announcements.

- **ABA ROLI, IRI, NDI, and IFES** all provided trainings and produced printed materials to various groups on subjects such as election complaints, observation, and election procedures.

